



Imitating the Apostle:

The Lord's Work Through Immanuel Paul Frey

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- INTRODUCTION -

All of us look for role models. And as Christians, we naturally strive to find someone in Scripture who emulates the type of life and demonstrates the kind of faith that is commended by the Lord. There are many of these Biblical role models from which to choose, but one could not go wrong by following the example of the apostle Paul. He was a man called by God to do the Lord's work. A missionary with an incredible zeal for wandering souls. A leader who gained respect and refused to back down when the Gospel was in danger of being debased. A preacher with a true pastor's heart. And a justified sinner whose focus was always on Christ. Paul had his faults, of course, but any Christian would do well to follow the Holy Spirit's encouragement through the apostle's own pen, "Therefore I urge you to imitate me" (1 Corinthians 4:16).

It seems there have been few who have followed this advice more thoroughly or in as many ways as Immanuel Paul Frey. Not because he was of apostle caliber or that his life of sanctification was above and beyond those around him, but because the Lord used him to spread the gospel during the 20th century in many of the same ways he used the great apostle in the early Christian church. I. P. Frey was also a man called by God to do the Lord's work, a missionary to the West, a leader among his peers, a solid preacher of the Word, and a grateful child of God whose first priority was always Christ. Both in personal characteristics and the variety of work he did for the Lord's kingdom he imitated the "least of the apostles" as closely as one could hope. And so it is to the Lord's glory that we now look at God's work through Immanuel P. Frey - a man who took these words of Paul to heart, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1).

The apostle Paul was an educated man when it came to the Old Testament Scriptures. This was partly because of his formal training and partly because of the family into which he was born. He was “circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin; a Hebrew of Hebrews” (Philippians 3:5). Paul, as a young Jewish boy, “would begin his study of the Scriptures at age five and study of the legal traditions of the Jews at age ten.”¹ Growing up in a household that followed the customs of the Jews, Paul undoubtedly learned about and treasured the traditions and the teachings passed down from one generation to the next.

Paul was proud of his Jewish heritage,² and yet at the same time he was a Roman citizen. Because of this seemingly unusual combination (Acts 22:25 ff.) Paul likely would have had many more educational opportunities in his life than a man who was only a Jew or a man who only enjoyed the citizenship of Rome. Regardless of his Roman privileges, though, Paul decided to study under the Pharisees. It seems that he was following in the footsteps of his ancestors by going down this path because he refers to himself as “the son of Pharisees” (Acts 23:6). And, apparently, he was a very zealous member, “advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of [his] own age” (Galatians 1:14).

But Paul was educated even beyond the intense training of a normal Pharisee. In effect, he sat at the feet of a private tutor. “Under Gamaliel,” Paul said to the Jews in

¹ David Valleskey, *A Portrait of Paul*, p. 15.

² The apostle Paul was definitely honored to be part of the Jewish nation and demonstrated his love for his fellow countrymen by going first to the Jewish synagogues in whatever town he entered. However, in order to put Paul’s words into the correct context, it must be noted that both in the letter to the Philippians and in 2 Corinthians 11:21b ff., Paul only refers to his pedigree to make the point that he would *not* boast in it. His family line is simply mentioned here to present the background of his education, not to give a claim to Paul that he did not want to make – solely for the sake of the gospel.

Jerusalem, “I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers” (Acts 22:3). If this is the same man mentioned in an earlier chapter of Acts, Gamaliel was also a Pharisee, “a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people” (Acts 5:34). This veteran and well-known teacher, then, who was held in high regard by the majority of the Jews, personally took the soon-to-be apostle under his wings and certainly contributed to Paul’s knowledge of the Old Testament. All of these factors, from his lineage through his formal training, contributed to Paul’s Scriptural knowledge in his early years. The Lord undoubtedly had a hand in all this so that by the time he converted Paul on the road to Damascus as “one abnormally born” and commissioned him to preach the gospel, the newly called apostle already had a solid foundation in the inspired Scriptures written down by Moses and the prophets.

I.P. Frey may not have been a Jew or a Roman citizen, but he was certainly a well-trained individual who came from a solid Lutheran family. The Scriptural roots of his ancestors can be traced at least as far back as his grandfather, Johannes Frey. He was born in 1806 at Börtlingen, Württemberg, serving there as a Gemeindepfleger – a position which was “perhaps [the] local village pastor.”³ There is not much else known about Immanuel’s grandfather, but by looking at the life of Johannes’ son, Jacob, it would be reasonable to presume that he at the very least brought his children “up in the training and instruction of the Lord” – as Paul encourages us all to do in Ephesians chapter six.

Jacob Frey, who was to eventually become Immanuel’s father, was also born in Börtlingen 44 years after his father on March 27th, 1850. He did not start out as a pastor initially, but took a political route, becoming the mayor of the town in which he was

³ The information about Jacob Frey’s life was taken from a “translation of family Bible references” copied from the Bible of Pastor Jacob Frey. His son, Pastor Conrad Frey “had it translated as well as it could be translated since there were also many abbreviations” (Letter to “Members of the Family,” March 7th, 1979).

born. “At that time [he became] the first teacher at the Spielanstalt,” which was a school “for the feeble-minded in Mariaberg.”⁴ On July 14th, 1883, after the birth of his first four children, Jacob, his wife Bertha, and his three surviving children set out from Germany on the ship “Herman” and arrived in Baltimore four days later. On December 23rd of that same year, Jacob Frey was installed as pastor of St. Peter’s in Moltke, MN, by J.C. Albrecht.⁵ Jacob had six more children while he was in America before dying of a hemorrhage at an early age in 1898, at Omro, Yellow Medicine, MN. He had been the town’s faithful under-shepherd there since 1891.

Immanuel Paul Frey was Jacob’s seventh child. He was born on October 18th, 1889 in Moltke, MN where his father was currently carrying out his pastoral ministry. Because of Jacob’s untimely death in 1898, Immanuel was left fatherless at the age of nine. This could not have been an easy time in the Frey household, especially since the 10th child, Frieda, was not born until August 23rd – eight months *after* her father passed away. With eight surviving children, the oldest one being 20 years old at the time, a good portion of the household responsibilities must have fallen to Immanuel and his elder siblings. These extra burdens, however, do not seem to have effected the spiritual



- Confirmation Day -

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Johann C. Albrecht, the pastor in New Ulm, MN, who began Dr. Martin Luther College, was a long time friend of the Frey family and Immanuel’s uncle. He and his wife Marie were godparents of Jacob’s fifth child, Eugenie, while Lydia Albrecht became a godparent of Immanuel in 1887.

development of Immanuel nor his pursuit of the public ministry, in large part due to his mother who was “determined that he was to serve the Lord as a minister of the Gospel.”⁶

Before his father died, Immanuel attended the parochial school at which his father served as the teacher. After 1898, he attended a variety of public and parochial schools, including a school in Lewiston where he had the privilege of being taught by his older brother, Oscar. Oscar eventually followed Immanuel to La Crosse, where I.P. was confirmed by Pastor Julius Gamm in 1903. Soon after his confirmation at First Lutheran Church in La Crosse, he enrolled in Dr. Martin Luther College of New Ulm, MN in the winter of 1904 with the intention of becoming a teacher in a parochial school.⁷



- DMLC -

- 1907 -

During his three years in New Ulm, Immanuel enjoyed a variety of sports – including baseball, a love which he would carry with him throughout his life.⁸ He was an average student in the classroom,⁹ faithful in his studies, and seemed fairly certain that he

⁶ Obituary of Immanuel P. Frey, *The Northwestern Lutheran*, Vol. 52, 1964, Num. 12, p.189.

⁷ Information of Immanuel Frey’s early life is taken from a brief synopsis written by Immanuel’s own hand in a journal entitled “Family History and Home Record.”

⁸ During dinnertime later in his life, Pastor Frey would often times leave the radio on so that he could listen to a ball game. In fact, he wouldn’t even turn it off while he led his family in prayer, prompting his wife to frequently comment, “I don’t think God can hear us over that noise...”

⁹ His grades ranged from the mid 80’s through the mid 90’s according to his 1906 report cards.

would be installed as a teacher in the very near future. J.P. Meyer, though, had a different option in mind for his young student. At the time of Immanuel's tenure at New Ulm, John Meyer was teaching Latin and Greek at Dr. Martin Luther College, classes in which Immanuel received some of his highest marks. Professor Meyer must have seen something in Immanuel's character and the young man of 17 evidently took the advice of his professor to heart, because in Immanuel's brief autobiographical sketch of his early years he mentions that at the "end of Quinta year, was persuaded by Prof. John Meyer to study for ministry."¹⁰ The "ministry" he refers to here is the ministry of the pastoral office. Accordingly, after completing his studies at DMLC in 1907, I.P. Frey enrolled as a sophomore at Northwestern College that fall.

It seems that Immanuel did well during his three years at Northwestern. Along with 21 of his classmates he graduated in the spring of 1910 and was chosen to deliver the English oration at the commencement celebration.¹¹ Naturally, that fall he enrolled in the Wisconsin Synod's theological seminary – located at the time in Wauwatosa, WI. It was here at the Seminary where Immanuel was given the opportunity to learn from, arguably, the best group of theologians he had been exposed to in his academic career. From 1910 until his graduation in 1913, I.P. Frey sat at the feet of the Seminary's three lone professors during that period: J.P. Koehler, August Pieper, and John Schaller. These men formed the triumvirate that was responsible for what is now known as the "Wauwatosa Gospel." They were the doctrinal protectors of the Synod for many years and the guardians of orthodoxy against the onslaught of the historical-critical method in the 20th century.

¹⁰ From a "Family History and Home Record."

¹¹ *Ibid.*

In the first 30 years of this century, these professors at the Wisconsin seminary in Wauwatosa refreshed the church with a direct appeal to the Bible. They honored the disciplines of the confessional, historical, and systematic theology, but they set exegetical theology on center stage. They honored the church's fathers in their writings but did not deify them. They studied the Lutheran Confessions but held them to their place as *norma normata*. In church and ministry, they distinguished biblical doctrine from deeply rooted European ministry traditions. God gave them grace to allow his Spirit to do the talking.

...Their writing exudes the confidence that Holy Writ provides everything the church needs to face every challenge. This is the great value in reading the Wauwatosa theologians.¹²

Many Wisconsin Synod pastors over the years benefited from these men and many more are edified and uplifted every day by the writings that Koehler, Pieper, and Schaller have left behind. I.P. Frey was fortunate enough to have been a witness of these men in person, to have been taught by their lectures, to have been matured through their sermons, to have been comforted by their personal counsel. The training and spiritual guidance he and his contemporaries received under their supervision was an incomparable blessing from the Lord, both in their own lives and for the direction of the Wisconsin Synod as a whole.

As with the apostle Paul, Immanuel Frey was blessed with a solid base in Scripture. They both were born into families that took the Word of God seriously. They were trained from early on within their own homes, they were educated with Scripture as their guide, and they both sat at the feet of the foremost theologians of their day. The Lord made sure that Paul was ready for the work he had prepared for him to do, and so too with I.P. Frey. From his Lutheran background through the spiritual guidance he received in his academic years, the Lord made sure this budding under-shepherd of souls had a sure foundation in Christ – and Christ alone.

¹² Wayne Mueller, introduction to The Wauwatosa Theology, Vol. I.

If there is one thing that the apostle Paul is known for, it is mission work. His missionary journeys have become world-renown. The routes he took have been mapped out in fine detail in the back of any number of Bibles. His methods have been studied by thousands of evangelists throughout the years after which to model their own. And even the Holy Spirit saw fit to spend over nine full chapters of inspired writing in the book of Acts on his missionary voyages. The work God did through Paul as a missionary surely is worth examining many times over, for Paul, more than any other apostle, epitomizes the spirit of the Great Commission given by the Lord himself.

Immanuel Frey was blessed with this same passion for the mission field. And in the midst of his service in the full-time ministry he was given the opportunity by the Lord to farm it. During that time I.P. Frey demonstrated not only his willingness to venture out into the unknown, but also his love for those who had not yet heard the gospel. His zeal for the lost sheep is evident in a mission article he wrote for the *Northwestern Lutheran*:

We have a responsibility toward the unchurched and the unsaved. The call is to go out into the highways and byways and to compel them to come in, so that furnished with the spotless garment of Christ's righteousness they may be made worthy to sit at the eternal banquet table of our God.¹³

What a reflection this is of the apostle Paul's very attitude as he carried out the Lord's work through his tireless pursuit of lost and wandering souls!

¹³ I.P. Frey, "Your Church's Mission Program," *The Northwestern Lutheran*, Vol. 29, p.218.

But before Paul ever set out on his official missionary journeys, the Lord took time to prepare him for that work in a variety of different venues. Soon after his conversion, the Lord had Paul preach in Damascus and also make a trip to Arabia. It is difficult to figure out which of these two places he arrived at first, but it is clear that Paul visited both of these locations regardless of the order. In Damascus “he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God” (Acts 9:20). This would prove to be good practice for what his normal mode of operation would become in the future. What Paul did in Arabia, though, isn’t quite as clear from Scripture as Valleskey points out:

We can only speculate on what Paul did during the time he spent in Arabia. The fact that Luke, who is deeply interested in recording the missionary activity of Paul, is completely silent about this trip, coupled with the context of Galatians (Paul doesn’t mention any preaching until the end of the chapter) leads one to conclude that Paul did not spend his time in Arabia evangelizing, but being prepared to evangelize. It would thus have been a time to meditate, to study, and perhaps to receive further revelations from the risen Lord.¹⁴

Not knowing exactly what Paul did during that time, it should suffice to say that whatever he was involved with was used by the Lord as further preparation and training for what was to come.

The Lord continued preparing Paul by sending him to Jerusalem where he spoke “boldly in the name of the Lord” (Acts 9:29), next to Syria and Cilicia, and then to Antioch. At Antioch “for a whole year Barnabus and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people” (Acts 11:26). And yet, all of this happened *before* the Holy Spirit set Paul apart for the mission work he was to do. In effect, God prepared Paul as a missionary by having him first serve as a parish pastor in established congregations at a number of locations.

¹⁴ David Valleskey, [A Portrait of Paul](#), p.19.

The newly graduated I.P. Frey had the same kind of pre-missionary training. In June of 1913 he graduated from the seminary in Wauwatosa and received a call to Zion Lutheran Church in Phoenix, Arizona. This congregation, consisting of about 20-30 members, had been formed three years before Immanuel arrived. Although it was quite a distance away from his hometown in Moltke, MN, and even farther from his family who had moved to Lansing, MI three years earlier, I.P. was eager to start his full-time work in the ministry. "My mother feels very badly about it," he wrote to his future wife, Elizabeth, "because I'm going so far away. But it can't be helped. For my part it does not make much difference to me where I'm called. There is just about as much work at one place as another."¹⁵

As Immanuel had suspected, there was much work to be done at Zion. Less than a year after he arrived in Phoenix his congregation was officially accepted as a member of the Wisconsin Synod. In 1918 they built their first church building and in 1924 Zion Lutheran became self-supporting. Throughout his eleven-year ministry in Phoenix,

He had also conducted services in Mesa and Chandler. He had also conducted services in Glendale for a number of families which belonged to Zion Church. These people were the nucleus for Grace Church of Glendale, which later organized as a separate congregation in 1927.¹⁶

But Pastor Frey was not only reaching out to other areas of the state, he was also building up the flock within his own pasture. While at Zion,

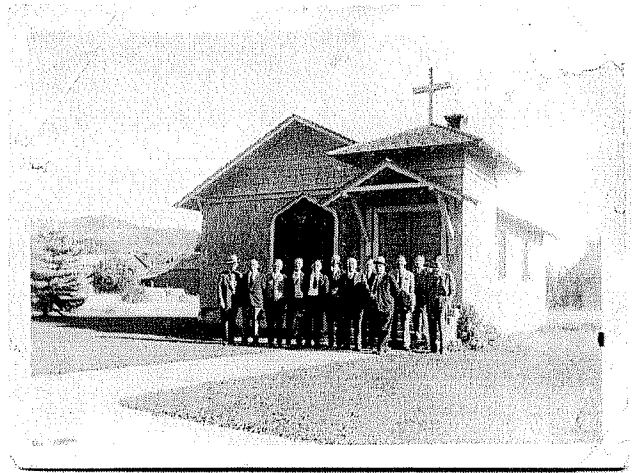
Eighty-two children and five adults were baptized, twenty-seven children and six adults confirmed. In 1917 German services were introduced and for a time held on Sunday evenings. Later they were held bi-weekly on Thursday evenings. During the years that Rev. Frey

¹⁵ Immanuel P. Frey, Letter to Elizabeth "Lizzie" Janz, June 16th, 1913. Interestingly, in this same letter, in which Immanuel told "Lizzie" where he had been called, he also asked her to marry him. In her reply, Elizabeth declined to give him an answer until she saw him face to face that next week. Two months and one day after she sent that letter, Immanuel and Elizabeth were married in Lansing, MI, August 19th, 1913.

¹⁶ 75th Anniversary pamphlet of Zion Lutheran Church, Phoenix, AZ, June 8th, 1986.

served the congregation the Sunday School was definitely organized under a separate constitution. A Ladies' Aid Society also was organized and a Young People's Society called into being. A church choir had been maintained for several years. Thus everything necessary for the maintenance and extension of a Christian church had been taken care of and the ground work laid for garnering precious sheaves in years to come for the kingdom of God in the baby state of Arizona.¹⁷

The Lord blessed Pastor Frey's work in the state and he likely would have stayed there longer if it were not for the health problems of his wife, Elizabeth. Because she suffered from "aggravated hay fever bringing on asthma,"¹⁸ I.P. accepted a call to Mt. Olive in Graceville, MN in 1924.



- Zion Lutheran, Phoenix, AZ -

His work at Mt. Olive was very similar to his efforts back at Zion. The same year Immanuel arrived in Graceville, the group of believers there was established as an official congregation. A year later they were able to move out of rented facilities and worship in their first church building, dedicated on June 21st, 1925. And in 1926 Mt. Olive was formally received into membership of the Wisconsin Synod. During his six-year stint in Minnesota, I.P. began a Ladies Missionary Society, a Sunday school, and a Christian Day School at which he served as the teacher.¹⁹ And on top of the normal pastoral duties which he faithfully carried out for his congregation, Immanuel was also assigned to the historic Peace Committee. This important synodical committee was in charge of dealing with the Protéstant controversy – but more on his work in that capacity later. In all, the

¹⁷ 25th Anniversary pamphlet of Zion Lutheran Church, Phoenix AZ, 1936, p.13-14.

¹⁸ Obituary of Immanuel P. Frey, The Northwestern Lutheran, 1964, Vol. 52, Num. 12, p.189.

¹⁹ "Golden Jubilee History," Minnesota District, 1968, Mt. Olive Lutheran Church.

Lord continued to bless Pastor Frey's work as he cared for souls in the parish ministry – hands on training that would serve him well in the mission field down the road.

After loyally serving Mt. Olive in Graceville for six years, Pastor Frey accepted a call to Hoskins, NE. From 1930-1939 he shepherded the flock there at Trinity Lutheran Church with his usual pastoral heart while serving the Lord in other positions as well. Along with sitting on that eight-member commission called the Peace Committee throughout the first part of his stay in Nebraska, he was elected to serve as the Secretary for the Nebraska District in 1932 as well, a position he would hold until 1936. It was during his time in Hoskins that he also began his lengthy tenure as Associate Editor for the Northwestern Lutheran in 1933. He would end up writing editorials for this official publication of the Wisconsin Synod and also its theological journal, the Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, for the next 30 years.²⁰ And if this were not enough to keep a man busy, while he was in Hoskins the Lord blessed him with his final few children – filling his family to its child capacity at eleven.

Pastor Immanuel Paul Frey certainly kept plenty busy before he ever stepped onto the mission field with any kind of formal title. As with Paul, the Good Shepherd developed Immanuel's pastoral skills before calling him to his first official duties as a missionary for his Church. Paul, likewise, received a similar call from the Lord to specifically do mission work (albeit in a far more miraculous way). Of course, that did not make the apostle's work any less difficult.

On Paul's first missionary journey he ran into plenty of obstacles. He was challenged by a Jewish sorcerer in Paphos, abandoned by his co-worker, John Mark, in

²⁰ I.P. Frey's longest work is an article entitled "Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary: 1863-1963," written at the request of the Seminary Centennial Committee. The Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, Vol. 60, July, 1963.

Perga, kicked out of Pisidian Antioch, narrowly escaped a stoning in Iconium, and actually *was* stoned in the town of Lystra. And despite all of those setbacks, he continued on with the Lord's work – even going back through those cities in which he had faced so much opposition.

His second journey threw just as many earthly roadblocks in the way of Paul's intended steps. In Philippi both Paul and Silas were beaten, flogged, and thrown in prison. In Thessalonica a jealous group of Jews took the missionaries' host, Jason, to court for harboring troublemakers. After the Christian brothers sent Paul, Silas, and Timothy away at night to Berea, the rabble from Thessalonica followed them there and stirred up the city against them. Fearing for Paul's life, the believers in Berea sent him to preach in Athens where the Holy Spirit brought only "a few men" to faith out of the many philosophers who had gathered there to listen. The apostle then began to spread the Word for a year and a half in Corinth, during which time the Jews constantly opposed him for teaching things "contrary to the law." And all of this was followed up by his third missionary journey. A trip that was "highlighted" by the life-threatening Artemis riot in the theatre at Ephesus and the near death experience at the hands of an angry Jewish mob in Jerusalem. And yet, Paul marched steadily on. He continued to spread the gospel despite any opposition or threat that he had to face.

Paul exemplifies a faith attitude that is marked by trust in the promises of God... Those involved in mission work today, whether it be in this country or abroad, like Paul should not expect an obstacle-free ministry. Hostility, indifference, and meager results can discourage and depress. Faith, though, will cling to God's promises. It will not focus on what hasn't been done. It will not allow obstacles to lead one to conclude that it can't be done. Instead it will remember and treasure Gods' assurance that the gospel is the power of God for salvation and that it will accomplish what God desires and achieve the purpose for which he sent it.²¹

²¹ David Valleskey, A Portrait of Paul, p.25.

It seems that God granted I.P. Frey with that same gift of persistent faith. This is not to say that he ran into riots and suffered floggings and escaped mobs, but he certainly clung to the promises of God and forged ahead into mission fields when there was anything but a guarantee of success.

In 1938, while Immanuel was still serving in Hoskins, NE, the Lord gave him his first opportunity for mission work.

In compliance with a resolution of the Joint Ev. Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin and Other States (1937 Synodic Report, p.59, 2A), the General President, the Rev. John Brenner, appointed the Pastors J. Gauss of Genera, Ohio, and [I]m. P. Frey of Hoskins, Nebraska, as members of the committee which was to perform the work in Arizona and Colorado outlined in the 1937 Synodic Report.²²

The work which they were to do involved a survey of the countryside, determining where they thought the Synod should pursue mission work and how urgent the need was in each location. Accordingly, Pastor Frey began his first missionary journey to the west with his own Barnabus, Pastor Gauss, at his side.

On March 7th of 1938, Frey and Gauss arrived in Flagstaff to begin their overview of Arizona. They would end up staying in the state for nearly three weeks, visiting a few dozen towns and communities, and traveling well over 1800 miles. And we must not overlook the fact that this trip was carried out in the late 1930's – during the middle of the Great Depression, in a state that was very much uninhabited, with communication and transportation nowhere near what it is today. The work of the two missionaries was continually hindered by the lack of information they had of the area, they drove through hundreds of miles of barren desert without every coming across a single town, and, on

²² "Report of Exploration Committee" to the General Synodical Committee of the Joint Ev. Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin and Other Sates, assembled in Milwaukee, WI, May 17-20, 1938, p.1.

more than one occasion, the major concern they were forced to look into was the lack of irrigation into a particular area.²³ This was not a vacation from the grindstones of their every day work. This was down in the dirt, bare-boned mission field preparation. Work that was difficult. Work that they took very seriously with a true heart for the lost.

Pastor Zimmerman drove us through this territory because he was of the opinion that this entire stretch of country should be thoroughly explored and canvassed by a special missionary. It is impossible for him to do this work, therefore another man for this field would be necessary. Your committee, after viewing these towns and cities and making inquiries in them also reached the conclusion that this field should be thoroughly explored and canvassed. The present population, the industries represented, and the prospects for future growth and development are such that our Synod should give this territory serious consideration before it is pre-empted by someone else.²⁴

But this 20th century Paul and Barnabus team was not only interested in the mission fields that could be financially independent in the near future. They were searching for lost souls anywhere they went, regardless of the size of the community's bank account.

Sunny Slope is a settlement just outside of the irrigated section and is made up of hundreds of cottages, in which health-seekers, tubercular people live. Some also live in trail[e]rs. About 2,000 of these unfortunate people make their home here throughout the year in search of health. Without doubt there is here an excellent opportunity to proclaim the saving and comforting Gospel of Christ, though there would be little hope of financial returns for the Synod. It would be a Good Samaritan service, such as Jesus entrusted to his followers. Is the Church, is our Synod willing to render such service?²⁵

Is the Synod willing? Is it worth it? The answer was obvious to Gauss and Frey, true adherents of Luke 19:10 and faithful followers of Matthew 28:19. Because this mission trip was not impeded by the imaginary, yet all too real, lines that separate one race from

²³ *Ibid.* selected pages.

²⁴ *Ibid.* p.2.

²⁵ *Ibid.* p.3.

another, the love that J. Gauss and I.P. Frey had for God's people was extended without reservation to "all nations."

A word might be said here about the Mexicans who are represented in considerable numbers in this district as well as other localities in Arizona. We were informed from various sources that the Mexicans are religious, and that, because many have drifted from the Catholic Church, successful mission work might be done among them by Protestants. This, however, calls for special type of mission work which under present conditions cannot be performed by our workers in Arizona.²⁶

This "special type of mission work" has to do, no doubt, with the language barrier. It was obvious to Gauss and Frey that a Spanish-speaking pastor would be needed if work was to be done. It was clearly a considerable speed bump in an age when Spanish was not so widely spoken in North America, much less taught. This was not an obstacle, though, that these missionaries thought should ever prevent the Synod from spreading the gospel to those who needed it. This untiring love for souls is demonstrated yet one more time in a description of the Indian School Sanatorium:

A wonderful plant for the treatment of tuberculosis in the Indians. One cannot walk through the wards and see the many Indians lying in bed without feeling moved. What a blessed work to bring the balm of Gilead to such!²⁷

And what blessed work those two missionaries did! Blessed work by the Lord that they also carried to Colorado on March 28th of that same year.

The time spent in Colorado was not as extensive, but it was no less intense. During their ten-day canvass they were delayed almost an entire day because of a flat tire, impeded by a snowstorm in the mountains, and forced to find a detour around another. And yet they managed to visit quite a number of cities while traveling over 700 miles

²⁶ *Ibid.* p.1.

²⁷ *Ibid.* p.5.

through the peaks and valleys of the Rocky Mountains.²⁸ Their trip produced several promising mission opportunities in Las Animas, Pueblo, and finally in Denver, which these two dedicated servants found to be a prime spot for synodical outreach as soon as possible.

It should be remembered that quite a few of our Wisconsin Synod Lutherans have in the past moved, and still are moving, into Denver, and we should earnestly consider whether we should not hold what we have and take advantage of the opportunity to work among the unchurched which is offered us in Denver.²⁹

This opportunity the Synod would take advantage of – by means of I.P. Frey himself in the not-so-distant future. But as for Immanuel in 1938, his first missionary journey had ended, and he went back to his family and parish in Hoskins to await the next call the Lord had in mind.

Pastor Frey did not have to wait long. Less than a year later, on January 26th, 1939, he received a call from the General Mission Board of the Wisconsin Synod to become the General Missionary for Colorado. This position was brand-new, created at the previous convention in 1937 and considered a top priority in the area of North American mission work. As a result, the man to accept this call would be committing himself to a wide range of responsibilities, as Pastor William Roepke makes clear:

This newly created office is of far-reaching importance, since it not only calls for extensive exploration work, but also carries the responsibility of establishing new missions in places where he, the General Missionary, has good reason to believe a resident missionary should be called. The importance Synod places on this office may be furthermore adduced from the fact that its resolution titles the General Missionary as a representative of his field, and the representative of the Colorado Conference at the

²⁸ *Ibid.* p.8-10.

²⁹ *Ibid.* p.10

General Mission Board meetings and the Synodical Committee meetings.³⁰

In the same letter, Roepke encourages I.P. to accept the call with a variety of compliments. He notes that Immanuel came “highly recommended” and that the Board also considered him “as a man with exceptional qualifications for this office.” On a personal note, Roepke confesses that he knows of “no man better qualified than you... and a man of high caliber, strong in faith, ardent in love and ripe in e[x]perience is most essential for this office as General Missionary.”³¹

Despite the sincere advances of friends and synodical workers alike, Pastor Frey did not immediately accept the call. The reason: he was concerned that the salary offered for the position, along with the Synod’s code that set the bonuses given for each child, would not be enough with which to support his family. This does not mean that Immanuel was holding out for a larger paycheck, he was simply worried that he would not be able to properly support his wife and the children who had not yet gone off on their own.³² This legitimate concern was not satisfied despite further correspondence between the two. However, on February 14th, Pastor Frey sent an acceptance letter to Roepke nevertheless:

Dear Brother Roepke,

You will have received my card, informing you that I had accepted the call as General Missionary in Colorado effective May 1st. I felt it my duty to accept the call chiefly because there was such an insistent demand in the Synod at large that I serve in this capacity and because to decline would give the whole General Missionary matter a setback, after so many futile calls.³³

³⁰ William Roepke, letter to Immanuel P. Frey accompanying the divine call from the Board of Home and Foreign Missions as General Missionary, January 26th, 1939.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Immanuel P. Frey, letter to William Roepke, January 31st, 1939.

³³ Immanuel P. Frey, letter to William Roepke, February 14th, 1939.

I.P. was still not happy with the financial straight that he was about to face, but his passion for the Lord's work apparently took precedence. Roepke for one was "very happy to hear" that Frey had accepted the call and assured him that there were also many more who "will be mighty thankful that you accepted."³⁴ With the full support, then, of the Synod (in spirit more so than financially), Immanuel P. Frey began his second missionary journey, so to speak, as the Synod's General Missionary to Colorado on May 1st, 1939.

Obviously, his beginning efforts in Colorado that May were not really the beginning at all. His new position enabled him to build off the work he had already accomplished with J. Gauss less than a year earlier. And with that in mind, it is no surprise that Pastor Frey went first to Denver, a city that he thought was ripe for the harvest back in March of 1938. As he writes in the Northwestern Lutheran, "When the General Missionary entered upon his work in Colorado the summer of 1939, one of the first objectives was to start a mission in the large and growing city of Denver."³⁵ His work there was not in vain. Just four months after he arrived in Denver, the first service was held on September 3rd, 1939, with 17 people in attendance. The very next week a Sunday school was established which served a remarkable 15 children. From the day services were started, they were held "upstairs in the lodge hall at the corner of E. 4th Ave. and St. Paul St.," and met every Sunday "with few omissions." This first mission field established by God through I.P. Frey was given the name "the Mt. Olive Mission."³⁶

³⁴ William Roepke, letter to Immanuel P. Frey, February 18th, 1939.

³⁵ I.P. Frey, "Your Church's Mission Program," The Northwestern Lutheran, Vol. 29, p.218.

³⁶ Hand written "History" of Immanuel P. Frey's work as General Missionary in Colorado, obtained from Pastor Mark Voss of Christ Our Redeemer, Aurora, CO.

With the Lord blessing his initial endeavors in Denver, the General Missionary began to branch out to the surrounding areas. On November 5th services were initiated in Golden, CO. The group of believers there met bi-weekly until June of 1940 when Pastor Victor Schultz took over the full-time pastoral duties for the congregation. Pastor Schultz also took over the responsibilities of the other Denver group, referred to as the North Denver Mission, in October, 1941. The opening service of this collection of families had been inaugurated back on April 13th of the same year, and continued to prosper under Pastor Schultz's care.³⁷

However, the Mt. Olive Mission, which seemed to be Pastor Frey's main focus, desperately needed to move out of the upstairs of the lodge hall and into their own facility. "It was realized from the beginning that a chapel would be a great aid in doing our work in Denver more effectively..." Immanuel wrote. "Chapels are the very backbone of mission work. Without a place to worship the missionary's hands are tied, yea, he may be forced to quit his labors. Let us provide the chapels."³⁸ Fortunately, the Mission Board agreed. Funds were subsequently allocated to Denver for the construction of the chapel, and on April 19th, 1942, the dedication service was held at South Elizabeth St. and E. Arizona Ave., two miles from the original location. The new site was primarily chosen because of the neighborhood in which it was located. Since it was a newer section of town it was seen as a prime spot to gather the lost – a demonstration of Pastor Frey's Christian zeal for those who still remained outside of the heavenly Jerusalem that he would carry with him throughout his ministry.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ I.P. Frey, "Your Church's Mission Program," The Northwestern Lutheran, Vol. 29, p.218.

Although this was an important accomplishment for the General Missionary (as far as human standards are concerned), I.P. knew that much more needed to be done.

There is much war [*sic*] work in and around Denver. Many workers are coming here, among them people from our Wisconsin Synod congregations. People easily drift from the church when coming into new communities, and, therefore, our pastors in Denver should be notified as soon as members of our congregations move into the city. Our work in Denver is still in its infancy and offers a fine opportunity to those [~~of our~~] Christians who not only wish to feed their own souls but who would like to take an active part in building our Lutheran Zion in a new field.³⁹

Two and a half months after this new chapel dedication, I.P. Frey ended his term as General Missionary. But he was not giving up on his work there. Rather, the reason he no longer continued in the position created by the General Mission Board was that he took a call extended to him by the *District* Mission Board of Colorado. He thus ended his second trip into the mission fields in July of 1942. Of course, that did not mean that his work would lessen, but only that his scope would narrow.⁴⁰

As with Paul's third missionary journey, Immanuel's third call into the sphere of mission work was not necessarily finding new places to go, but to build upon the foundation he had earlier laid. His new title under the District Mission Board became Resident Missionary, and along with that call he also became the first full-time pastor for Mt. Olive Lutheran Church – the very congregation he had initially harvested from the unchurched fields of Denver. This is the parish in which Pastor Frey would serve for the

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Although I.P. Frey was blessed with many talents, he was not overconfident of his abilities. One month before he took the call from the District Mission Board, he returned a call to be the Institutional Missionary in the Fox River Valley. In a letter to the chairman of the Board for Home and Foreign Missions he explains, "I believe that this type of work calls for special talents and, in a manner of speaking, a special liking for that type of work, and I do not think that I have that. I should hate to take over the work and later find that I have not the proper degree of enthusiasm for it. My fears may be unfounded, but I hesitated to do anything which would give this new undertaking a handicap." (Letter to W. Roepke, June 11th, 1942).

entire extent of his third missionary endeavor and the flock he would shepherd for the remainder of his life.

Looking back, the approach Immanuel P. Frey took to his mission efforts over these three time periods is easily comparable to the methods and general procedures of the apostle Paul. Pastor David Valleskey sums up Paul's mission strategy into five separate points, four of which can also serve as a review of Pastor Frey's labors Arizona and Colorado.⁴¹

1. "Paul was flexible in his itinerary." It was apparent in Colorado during I.P. Frey's first missionary trip that he had no problem changing his plans. Yes, he had a plan and a specific procedure he wanted to follow, but he was not deterred when snowstorms, flat tires, or any other earthly obstacle got in his way. He simply found another route and another group to which he could eventually bring the gospel.

2. "Paul carried on his work largely in the most strategic cities of an area." The city of Denver is obviously the prime example of this tactic carried out in the work of Pastor Frey. His goal was always to spread the word to as many people as possible, which would naturally lead him to the largest city. This is not to say that he overlooked the small towns, but he realized the efficiency of an urban starting point such as Pueblo, Phoenix, Flagstaff, and, of course, Denver.

3. "Right from the beginning Paul established heterogeneous churches." I.P. Frey's noticeable love for the Mexicans in Arizona and the "Indians" in Colorado should make it clear that he longed for all people, regardless of race or color, to be gathered

⁴¹ The following four numbered quotes are taken from: David Valleskey, A Portrait of Paul, p.33-41. The third summary sentence of Valleskey's synopsis that didn't quite fit I.P. Frey's normal practice is "Paul's work in the synagogue served as a 'bridge' to the community." There are few parallels there for obvious reasons.

together in the Lord's house. Although it is true that he suggested that special workers come down to Arizona who had training in Spanish, this was simply for the sake of the gospel. He never had the intention that a separate church would be built up for each individual nationality. He was an equal opportunity missionary, if you will, making mention of Norwegians and German Russians, among others, throughout his exploratory report with Pastor Gauss.⁴²

4. "Paul concentrated his efforts in areas where the gospel had not yet been preached." It probably goes without saying that this is what makes a missionary a missionary. As Paul realized the need to spread the gospel across the Mediterranean basin, Immanuel Paul saw the need to spread the gospel to the western portion of the United States. He ached for those people who had never heard about their Savior and made a concerted plea to the Mission Board, especially in Arizona, to concentrate their efforts in the places where no Lutheran church of any kind was found for hundreds of miles.

Along the entire stretch of more than 300 miles through northern Arizona from New Mexico to California, it must be remembered, there is not a single Lutheran church, though it boasts of a number of modern cities and towns which show evidences of growth and permanency.⁴³

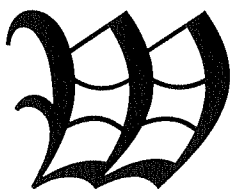
The heart of this modern-day missionary would have loved nothing more than to see the sweet gospel spread throughout this spiritually barren desert – and from there to the world.

Not much more can be said about the mission toil of Frey in the exemplary pattern of Paul. They both loved what they did for the Lord with an unmatched fervor for

⁴² "Report of Exploration Committee" to the General Synodical Committee of the Joint Ev. Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, assembled in Milwaukee, WI, May 17-20, 1938, p.8,9.

⁴³ *Ibid.* p.

the lost. They both used their gifts to the Lord's glory in whatever they did. And they were both content with remaining vessels, jars of clay, which the Lord would use to spread his glorious message to every tribe, people, and language.



hen Immanuel P. Frey died in 1964, Pastor Victor Bittorf wrote, “The Wisconsin Synod, the Church Militant, has lost a God-given leader.”⁴⁴

Considering the number of positions Pastor Frey held and the amount of responsibility he was given over the years, many Lutherans across the Synod must have felt the same way. The Lord did give Immanuel the gift of leadership, but he also gave him the opportunity to use that gift in several, yet very important ways for the good of the Wisconsin Synod.

Like Paul, who was one of, if not *the* leader of the early Christian church, Immanuel Frey would inevitably be forced to deal with some exceptionally difficult issues because of the leadership qualities he possessed. One of these difficulties arose with the Protestant controversy that came to a head in the late 1920's, a split that sends subtle reverberations through synodical niches still today. This controversy, and especially the men involved with it, must have caused Pastor Frey many a sleepless night.

It is not an easy thing to sum up the Protestant controversy in simple fashion. But for the sake of understanding the role that I.P. Frey played, the following summary by Peter Prange will be used and slightly elaborated.

To most outsiders this controversy could probably be summed up in two words: personality conflicts.

That, however, would be a gross understatement. The Protestant Controversy was about more than just personalities; it was a controversy about motives, methods and especially ideas. To the participants and some observers this controversy was not just a matter of opinion or simple

⁴⁴ Obituary of Immanuel P. Frey by Pastor Victor Bittorf, May 25th, 1964.

adiaphora; it was a matter of *Bekennnis* (confession), doctrine and pastoral practice.⁴⁵

The personalities referred to in Prange's summary are characters like August Pieper on one side and J.P. Koehler on the other. There were obviously many more people involved, but these two powerful figures, Seminary colleagues, and co-contributors to the Wauwatosa Gospel were at the center of the fray. However, the motives, methods, and ideas that were disputed are a little more complicated to explain.

In general, there seem to be five major events that were kindling in the fire. First, there was the Watertown Case involving a question of discipline, in which there was a disagreement about the authority of the School Board over the faculty. Secondly, the Fort Atkinson Case presented problems between the accusations of two female teachers against the supervision of the congregation's pastor, the subsequent removal of their positions in the school, and the following calls both of the women received to another location – despite the present disciplinary situation still in process. Thirdly, a professor at the Seminary named Gerhard Ruediger, who sided with the ladies in Fort Atkinson and the professors in Watertown, spoke against the Synod's actions to his students and helped to foster unrest among his brothers. Fourthly, Pastor William F. Beitz, another man of the Protéstant cloth, delivered a conference paper in which he mixed justification with sanctification, made unscriptural judgments of others, and promoted the beliefs of the Protéstants – among other questionable statements. The Beitz Paper, as it is now known, became a rallying point for those who were of the same opinion. And finally, in May of 1930, Professor Koehler was relieved of his professorship at the Seminary, capping off an ugly scenario of harsh words and strained relationships. Those who were suspended from

⁴⁵ Peter M. Prange, "Pastor E. Arnold Sitz and the Protéstants: Witnessing to the Wauwatosa Gospel," p.3.

fellowship with the Wisconsin Synod formed the group that became known as the Protéstants.

All of these events became inter-related and snowballed into the controversy now before us. And again, this is, admittedly, an oversimplification of the whole affair, but sufficient for our purposes to demonstrate the main ingredients in a deadly concoction. And Immanuel P. Frey was thrown into the pot as it was boiling over.

In 1929, the Synod's convention resolved to form a Peace Committee to deal with the Protéstants. This committee was set up to consider any case brought before them by the Protéstants on an individual basis. Along with seven others, Immanuel was appointed to sort through the mess. But this was not exactly something he was looking forward to.

Anyone who should imagine that I consider myself competent to serve on the committee is very much mistaken. The fact is that I feel so incompetent that I would gladly resign from it if I could do so without doing violence to my conscience. My only consolation is that God knows how to work through weaker vessels.⁴⁶

It was probably a committee on which no one was competent enough to serve, but Frey had understandable reservations. Two of the major players, Pastor W.F. Beitz, and Pastor E.A. Sitz, had been his friends and confidants for years.⁴⁷ And now those friendships would have to be put on hold for the sake of objective evaluation. This is never an easy thing, nor was it made any easier with the complexity of the situation. William Beitz readily admitted to I.P., "You have certainly undertaken some task. It is simply an

⁴⁶ Immanuel P. Frey, letter to W.P. Hass, November 27th, 1929, quoted in "Pastor E. Arnold Sitz and the Protéstants: Witnessing to the Wauwatosa Gospel," by Peter M. Prange, p.123.

⁴⁷ While I.P. Frey was in Arizona at his first parish, Beitz was a relatively close pastoral brother in Tuscon. In fact, Zion Lutheran's 25th Anniversary pamphlet records that Beitz delivered the sermon for the dedication of Frey's first church building in 1918 (p.9).

impossibility to do the work assigned to you. You simply can't delve into the details of all these affairs."⁴⁸

Pastor Immanuel Frey certainly could not, even though he had been distantly involved with the whole dilemma years before he was elected to the Committee. Beitz, a close friend from early on in Frey's ministry, wrote him numerous letters about every situation and naturally expounded on his own opinions as well for years leading up to Frey's appointment. Sitz, too, wrote to I.P. throughout the controversy, making a legitimate attempt to reach a solution. He even made a "friendly plea" to his pastoral brother at one point asking him to resign from the committee.⁴⁹ I.P. did not resign, but stayed on the committee until it dissolved in 1933. As for E.A. Sitz, although a friend of Beitz and concerned about the direction the Synod had taken on some of the issues, remained on the Wisconsin Synod side in the end. And despite his disagreements with Frey during this chaotic period, neither of them let it dampen their friendship in future years.⁵⁰

Regardless of I.P. Frey's personal attachments to men on both sides of the split, the divide proved to be the great chasm of Luke 16. But it wasn't as though I.P. didn't try. And it wasn't as though he was the wrong man for the job. Even though Pastor Frey

⁴⁸ William Beitz, letter to Immanuel P. Frey, May 18th, 1928, quoted in "Pastor E. Arnold Sitz and the Protéstants: Witnessing to the Wauwatosa Gospel," by Peter M. Prange, p.2.

⁴⁹ E.A. Sitz, letter to Immaneul P. Frey, May 27th, 1930, quoted in "Pastor E. Arnold Sitz and the Protéstants: Witnessing to the Wauwatosa Gospel," by Peter M. Prange, p.130.

⁵⁰ While I.P. Frey and J. Gauss visited Arizona during their mission exploratory work in 1938, E.A. Sitz entertained the missionaries for two days, drove them around the area, and even loaned them his car for transportation. ("Report of Exploration Committee," p.6). And this was not simply extending empty pleasantries. In October of that same year, in preparation for a Mission Board and Synodical Committee meeting, Pastor Sitz wrote to Frey, "It would please me greatly, if it meets with your pleasure, to share a room with you at the Republican House." Obviously, their evangelical spirit overcame any differences they may have had in the synodical spotlight. (E.A. Sitz, letter to I.P. Frey, October 8th, 1938). Pastor Sitz even wrote Immanuel's official obituary in the Northwestern Lutheran when he died in 1964. (Obituary of Immanuel P. Frey, The Northwestern Lutheran, 1964, Vol. 52, Num. 12, p.189).

“was a very evangelical man and he couldn’t get anywhere with those Protéstants.”⁵¹ It seems that no one could. Because the problem, although “solved” through suspensions and splits, was never really *resolved*.⁵² And blood still boils in the veins of the current generation of Protéstants every time they are reminded of those tumultuous years.

Near the end of those exceedingly busy and trying times, Pastor Frey’s leadership skills were also starting to be channeled in different directions. In 1932 he was elected by the Nebraska District to serve as their secretary. He did so loyally until 1936. Two years later, in conjunction with his missionary trips to the west, he served as the chairman of the Nebraska District Mission Board until 1942. During that time he was also vice-president of the District, a position he held until 1943. In February of that year the current president, Pastor Witt, “had to resign because of ill health” and Immanuel writes that he “had to succeed him.”⁵³ It does not sound like I.P. was particularly thrilled to be in the position he was in, but, as with anything he did throughout his ministry, he did it to the best of his abilities and to the Lord’s glory. Of course, that doesn’t mean his presidency was problem free. There were a number of difficulties he had to face, not the least of which was his own congregation.

At the time of his first year as president, he was just beginning his full-time parish work at the newly founded Mt. Olive congregation in Denver. This is the congregation that the Lord had built through him from the ground up, sprouting from his mission work in 1938 and growing into the new chapel building he had pushed for in 1942. Immanuel Frey was their father pastor and the only pastor they had ever had in their brief existence.

⁵¹ Informal interview with Professor John Brenner, November 2nd, 2005.

⁵² A total of 40 suspensions were carried out over the years because of the Protéstant Controversy. The last suspension was handed out as late as 1981. (“Lutheranism in America,” Senior Church History notes, p.69-70).

⁵³ Immanuel P. Frey, letter to C.J. Niedfeldt, February 19th, 1943.

It is somewhat understandable, then, why they may have wanted him to concentrate his efforts toward their parish rather than spend valuable time at synodical and district functions. It might have been a bout of selfishness on the part of the congregation or simply a case of ignorance about the importance of the position he held, but in any case, they made it clear that they did not want him to be a district president because they feared it would interfere with his work at Mt. Olive.⁵⁴

This issue was actually something Immanuel was concerned about himself. He loved parish ministry, treasured the work to be done in it, and cherished the sheep he was privileged to serve. He always considered the congregation his first priority and was bothered by the fact that he had to leave them from time to time for extracurricular business. When he was asked by the Synod later in his ministry to write a history of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, he almost declined to do it simply for the fact that it would take too much time away from his parish work.⁵⁵ And earlier, in 1944, he even confided to Pastor E.C. Monhardt that he was displeased with the proposal to have the General Synod convention in the middle of the week because “for a number of Delegat[e]s that means to be away from their flock for two Sundays.”⁵⁶ It was evident that Pastor Frey did not necessarily *want* to leave his congregation on account of his elected office from time to time, but he realized that he *must* do so for the sake of the Synod at large. Unfortunately, the believers at Mt. Olive were never able to see the situation in the same light.

Around the time I.P. stepped into the shoes of Nebraska District President, the Wisconsin Synod was in the middle of an intense doctrinal battle with the Lutheran

⁵⁴ Informal interview with Philip Frey, November 23rd, 2005.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ E.C. Monhardt, letter to Immanuel P. Frey, January 17th, 1944.

Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS). For years there had been continual discussions about and statements produced on some critical issues, such as Church and Ministry, Scouting, and Military Chaplaincy. But the overriding problem the Wisconsin Synod had with the LCMS was their gradual (and sometimes not-so-gradual) slide toward unionism. As a District President, Pastor Frey would have naturally been drawn into these inter-synodical proceedings in some way, but he was even more intimately involved as a member of Wisconsin Synod’s Union Committee. This committee was the pre-cursor of the Commission on Doctrinal Matters whose job it was “to represent the Synod in doctrinal discussions with other church bodies, and to extend and conserve the true doctrine and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.”⁵⁷ As a member of the Union Committee during these poignant times, this seasoned pastor from Colorado would be wrapped up in some of the most serious and crucial issues that the Synod has ever faced up to the present day.

One of the more divisive documents that the Union Committee had to deal with directly was the Missouri Synod’s *Common Confession*. This document, which they presented to the churches of the Synodical Conference in 1951, was supposed to be a “settlement of the doctrines” between the LCMS and the ALC.⁵⁸ This was necessary to achieve since the LCMS was practicing fellowship with the ALC at the disapproval of the other Conference members.

After receiving a copy of the *Common Confession*, Wisconsin’s Union Committee prepared a “Review of the *Common Confession*,” based on a deep concern not to limit God’s grace especially in the doctrines of justification, conversion, and election. This “Review,” came to

⁵⁷ Pastor Victor Bittorf, Obituary of Immanuel P. Frey, May 25th, 1964.

⁵⁸ Armin W. Schuetze, *The Synodical Conference: Ecumenical Endeavor*, NPH, Milwaukee, 2000, p.295.

conclusions that closely paralleled those of the Norwegians we noted above.⁵⁹

According to Wisconsin's "Review," the Common Confession was unacceptable also in what it said in Article V, Means of Grace, about the Holy Scriptures and their inspiration.⁶⁰

Obviously, because of the Union Committee's work, the Wisconsin Synod would not accept the Common Confession as a settlement of the significant differences between the LCMS and the ALC and demanded that "Missouri should suspend negotiations" with them immediately.⁶¹ They did not, however, and things only grew worse from there.

The Wisconsin Synod, of course, continually worked at bringing the LCMS back to their senses. In 1954 I.P. Frey himself delivered a paper on "Joint Prayer" at the Missouri-Wisconsin Synod Presidents' Conference. This was written specifically against their current practice of praying with those not in fellowship with their church body. "Prayer is a religious act," Frey wrote. "It is an act of worship. When I pray with someone I am joined in worship with him."⁶² This, after all, is exactly what Scripture teaches, and I.P. intended to state that truth as clearly as possible so that the LCMS would repent of their sins and renew their dedication to the Doctrine of Fellowship as set forth by the clear word of God. "We plead with you to return to that position and again to stand shoulder to shoulder with us in the battle against religious unionism."⁶³ With this evangelical plea President Immanuel P. Frey concluded his paper – a testimony of the truth to his peers and to his Lord.

⁵⁹ The Norwegian Synod concluded that the Common Confession failed "to reject ALC doctrinal errors in regard to Scripture, justification, conversion, election, the essence of the church, and several errors in the doctrine of the Last Things" (*Ibid.* p.295).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* p.296.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* p.297.

⁶² Immanuel P. Frey, "Joint Prayer," p.2, delivered at the Missouri-Wisconsin Synod Presidents' Conference, Milwaukee, WI, January 12th-15th, 1954.

⁶³ *Ibid.* p.4.

This plea was unfortunately all for naught. As the years passed and it became apparent that the LCMS would not back down, but rather was moving farther down the path of unionism, the Wisconsin Synod had no other choice but to end formal relations with their long-time confessional sister Synod. After repeated and earnest attempts to correct the erring brothers, the official suspension of fellowship with the LCMS was finally carried out in 1961.

The pastors, teachers and lay delegates back in the Nebraska District of the Wisconsin Synod, however, did not think their leaders were moving fast enough. And I.P. Frey, as a member of the Union Committee and the President of their district, bore the brunt of their malcontent. In 1958 President Frey was voted out of office because the desired break with the Missouri Synod had not yet happened.⁶⁴ This, of course, did not speed up the process in any way, it was simply one of the many unfortunate effects of Synod-wide impatience.

Immanuel, although understanding of the situation, was ready to stay away from the formal discussions with the LCMS altogether because he was sensitive to how he would be perceived by the LCMS representatives without a “presidential” title in front of his name. Oscar Naumann, however, the President of the Wisconsin Synod at the time, was completely confident in I.P.⁶⁵ He realized that “God had endowed him with a clear mind, good judgment, and facile expression both by word and pen. But above all God had given him an evangelical approach to the Gospel of Christ.”⁶⁶ So despite Frey’s ousting from the District President position, Naumann appointed Pastor Frey to the Commission on Doctrinal Matters – the new face of the Union Committee formed under

⁶⁴ Informal interview with Professor John Brenner, November 2nd, 2005.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Obituary of Immanuel P. Frey, The Northwestern Lutheran, 1964, Vol. 52, Num. 12, p.189.

the Synod's new constitution in 1959. I.P. Frey would serve in this capacity "for many years preceding his death,"⁶⁷ faithfully proclaiming the law and gospel as a true servant of Christ.

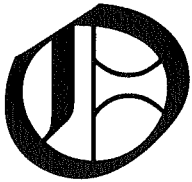
Looking back at the leadership aspects of I.P. Frey's ministry, it can be said that the Missouri Synod was Immanuel's Peter. The apostle Paul did not hesitate to speak the truth when Peter stepped out of line in Antioch (Galatians 2:11 ff.), and Immanuel did not back down when faced with the Missouri Synod's errors either. Both Paul and I.P. were forceful in their confrontations with those who had compromised Scripture, and yet they did so with a loving hand and a patient voice – characteristics that are honorable in any minister of the gospel.

But if the Missouri Synod was Immanuel's Peter, then the Protéstants were his Corinth. There were many problems with the congregation in Corinth that Paul was compelled to deal with, and he did so with a confidence that only comes from the Word. So, too, Immanuel. He dealt with the Protéstants not only with a gentle spirit but with authority from the Spirit's own voice. Neither of the situations that Paul or Immanuel handled was simple, but both of these overseers conducted themselves throughout their respective ministries with a Christian attitude "above reproach" (1 Timothy 3:2).

But perhaps the most striking characteristic these two men shared was their humility. Pastor Frey, as demonstrated, felt incompetent to serve on the Peace Committee, considered himself unworthy to work with the Commission of Doctrinal Matters, and seemed reluctant to take over the job of District President. Paul, likewise, admitted that he was the least of the apostles, boasted in nothing but his sufferings, and boldly proclaimed that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am

⁶⁷ Obituary of Immanuel P. Frey by Pastor Victor Bittorf, May 25th, 1964.

the worst” (1 Timothy 1:15). It is with these God-given qualities that Paul wrote to his sheep as recorded in Scripture, and it is with these same blessings that Immanuel used his pen for the work of the gospel and for the glory of the Lord.



ne cannot compare another to the apostle Paul without referring to what Paul wrote. Carried along by the Holy Spirit he either penned or dictated twelve inspired letters. These books of the Bible were written to groups and individuals alike on a wide range of topics. But the main theme that was interwoven through every one of his chapters in every one of his books was *Christ*. Immanuel wrote a number of things, as well, to a diverse audience on a variety of issues. And even though I.P. Frey was far from inspired, he wrote on what was inspired. On paper or in the pulpit he simply preached the law and the gospel. And he always, *always* focused on Christ. While the Holy Spirit used Paul to craft the “double-edged sword,” he gave Immanuel the skills to fight with it.

It would be an impossibility to cover everything that Immanuel P. Frey has written on over the years. On top of President’s reports, Quarterly articles, mission reports, and numerous editorials in the Northwestern Lutheran, there remain in existence the majority of the thousands of sermons he wrote during his 51-year call as a public preacher of the gospel. But in an attempt to present at least a taste of his style, a sample of the content contained in these countless documents will be compared with selected topics discussed by Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians.

- Stewardship -

The apostle was not hesitant about speaking of financial stewardship. In the last chapter of 1 Corinthians Paul encourages the congregation to bring to a close the “collection for God’s people” in Jerusalem. This request made by Paul is particularly similar to the request made by Immanuel to his brothers and sisters in the Nebraska

District. In a letter dated January 24th, 1945, he addresses the pastors and parishioners of his district about the building collection for the synodical schools and mission fields: “If all pastors and congregations will put their shoulders to the wheel, the collection in our District should soon be brought to a successful conclusion.”⁶⁸ Pastor Frey did not intend to personally visit each congregation as Paul himself did with the Corinthians, but I.P. was going to make sure that each congregation would be called on by the “Visitor” from its particular conference. Like Paul, this Visitor would be their “immediate contact man,”⁶⁹ gain an understanding of the congregation’s situation, and keep them informed about any further collection information.

But Pastor Frey didn’t forget to include himself in this grace of giving – or the lack of it. In 1946 the problem still seemed to be an issue. There was an ever-increasing need for pastors in the congregations, missionaries in the mission fields, and teachers in the schools. The vacancies across the Synod were rising higher and higher. And to make matters worse, because the collection had not been finished, the schools were being forced to turn prospective students away on account of the lack of space.

This makes it imperative that we bring our Building Fund collection to an early close. Several letters and reports on the progress of this undertaking have been sent to the congregations of our District. We as a District must confess that we have thus far failed to do our fair share toward this goal. We must hang our heads in shame. In these days of prosperity when money is plentiful in our circles we have denied the Lord the paltry sums required to supply the need. Let us repent of this, acknowledge this debt of Christian love and bring the Building Fund collection to a speedy conclusion.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Immanuel P. Frey, letter to the Pastors and Congregations of the Nebraska District, January 25th, 1945.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Nebraska District Proceedings, “President’s Address and Report,” 1946, p.8.

There were few men more concerned about the lack of workers to fill vacancies than Immanuel P. Frey.⁷¹ And he considered this collection a crucial part of meeting that need. With that love for the Lord's work in mind, he concluded his letter to the Nebraska District in 1945 with these words, "We have a great and important work to do. Though the aggregate sum looks large, it is small compared to the spiritual and financial blessings which God has showered upon the individual members of our synod. If we first give ourselves to the Lord who bought us, the rest will follow."⁷²

- The Resurrection -

Arguably, one of the greatest chapters in all of Scripture is chapter 15 in the book of 1 Corinthians. Pastor I.P. Frey preached on it himself quite a few times throughout his ministry on the Sunday after Easter. He realized that "If Christ did not rise, then we would have to write 'Lost' and 'Damned' on the headstone [of] everyone who died believing in Christ, including our own."⁷³ The Resurrection is at the heart of our Christian faith and at the center of each sermon Immanuel preached.

Of course, like any good Lutheran preacher, I.P. could not lift his hearers up with the gospel without first crushing them with the law.

It is the law which drives the sting deep into the soul and makes it the instrument of torture that it is. The law is like the muscular arm of the burly driver which drives the point of the goad deep into the flanks of the oxen. The more muscular the driver is and the more force he puts behind the thrust the deeper the point goes into the flesh and the greater the hurt. And the law is burly and muscular. It drives the sting deep into the conscience. If sin is the sting of death, then the law is what makes men feel the sting.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Frey had apparently written to his friend, E.C. Monhardt in 1944, voicing his concern about the number of vacancies in the Synod. Monhardt responded, "Your last question about our many vacancies and how to remedy this sad condition, I must say keep on calling and praying that the Lord of the harvest would send forth labourers [*sic*] into His harvest." (E.C. Monhardt, letter to Immanuel P. Frey, January 17th, 1944).

⁷² Immanuel P. Frey, letter to the Pastors and Congregations of the Nebraska District, January 25th, 1945.

⁷³ Immanuel P. Frey, sermon on 1 Cor. 15:12-22, April 29th, 1962.

⁷⁴ Immanuel P. Frey, sermon on 1 Cor. 15:50-58, April 16th, 1944.

But if “the law is the hammer which drives the sting of sin into us,”⁷⁵ as I.P. wrote, then the gospel must be the hammer which drove the sting of sin into Christ.

Jesus exposed himself to the sting of the Old Serpent, the devil, so that he expended all his hatred and fury upon Jesus and has nothing left with which to harm us... Jesus removed the sting of sin by paying its penalty upon the cross as our Substitute... The law hasn't anything to pound into us anymore because sin is gone... The sharp edge of sin is dulled and blunted by the sacrificial death of Jesus, so that it can't be driven into us anymore. It cannot penetrate the armor of the blood and righteousness with which Jesus has covered us. “There is no more condemnation to us who are in Christ Jesus.”⁷⁶

This is the gospel with which Immanuel P. Frey continually left his hearers. A gospel completely focused on the redeeming acts of Jesus. A gospel full of comfort. A gospel of peace. Really, the only *gospel* there is.

- Love -

Almost every seasoned pastor has preached on 1 Corinthians chapter 13, more than enough engaged couples have picked it for their wedding text, and even those outside the Christian ranks might be able to recognize a verse or two. But I.P. Frey *lived* it. God, in his grace, allowed Immanuel to put Paul's words into practice no matter what congregational situation he faced or what member he was forced to deal with. It was certainly not easy for him – it never is – because love within the Christian congregation is a constant bull's eye for the devil's attacks.

When Satan is especially anxious to break up and destroy a congregation, he does not make his attack from the outside but from the inside. Attacks from the outside more often result in bringing the members of a church closer together than of tearing them apart... Satan knows that more harm can be done to a xtian congregation by internal strife than by external strife, by an attack from within than by an attack from without. He is

⁷⁵ Immanuel P. Frey, sermon on 1 Cor. 15:51-58, April 20th, 1952.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

therefore always busy trying to stir up strife and dissention and enmity between the members of a congregation.⁷⁷

Pastor Frey knew this first hand. Back in 1918, when he wrote the above sermon introduction for his first congregation, he may not have yet realized from experience the full implications of these words. But by the time he preached the same text to his final congregation 38 years later, he surely appreciated the difficulty that lies in preserving Christian love within a group of believers.

During his ministry at Mt. Olive in Denver, there were many heated voters' meetings in which he often bore the brunt of their complaints – especially around the time of the latter sermon he preached in 1956. This was two years before he was voted out of office because of his involvement with the Union Committee and their perceived lack of action. The members were not happy with him, partly because they had wanted the Wisconsin Synod to break with the LCMS sooner and partly because his time as District President was taking away from his work in Denver. But I.P. “never said a word against them.”⁷⁸ He stood in those voters' meetings and took the verbal onslaughts in silence, knowing there was no use in losing his temper. After one of these impassioned meetings, Phil Frey, one of his sons who regularly attended the meetings with him, asked, “Why don't you just yell at them to shut up?” I.P. slowly shook his head and said, “No, I could never do that.”⁷⁹ And he never did. He always respected the opinions of others and strove to love even his enemies with the same kind of love that Christ had shown to him. He left the conviction of the law to his sermons.

Testing our past conduct by what is said here, we must realize how much lovelessness there is in our lives. Are we always acting toward others as

⁷⁷ Immanuel P. Frey, sermon on 1 Cor. 13, February 7th, 1918.

⁷⁸ Informal interview with Philip Frey, November 23rd, 2005.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

our text says charity does? No one who is honest with himself will dare to claim that. "Charity suffereth long," we are told. Love is patient. It puts up with much and it takes a lot. How much a loving mother takes from a wayward son before casting him off, that often passes our comprehension, but the fact is that there is hardly a limit to what love will put up with. Much of the bad relations with one another are due to the fact that we don't want to take anything from one another, that we are short with one another, that we are resentful. We like to say that we are willing to meet another halfway but not a step further. That is not brotherly love speaking but touchy, selfish pride speaking...⁸⁰

If this preaching of the law did not cut to the heart of the matter during those tense days of strained relationships, it is hard to think of a sermon that could. Of course, this ever-evangelical pastor did not send them home with the law, but as always, he let the love of Christ dominate their minds and their hearts.

True love and charity is longsuffering. God has that kind of love and charity toward us. God did not cease to love the world when it sinned against him and repaid his good with evil, no, he continued to love the world in spite of the misdeeds which sinners committed against [him], yea, he continued to love the world so much that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life.⁸¹

The key to good relations with one another is brotherly love, and that we can acquire only by exposing our hearts to the fire of God's love which blazed on Calvary.⁸²

Despite the internal feuds with that congregation, Pastor Frey remained with them out of love, and they with him, for the remainder of his ministry.

- The Lord's Supper -

In 1942, Immanuel P. Frey wrote a sermon on 1 Corinthians 11 with the theme: What is the Lord's Supper?⁸³ This sermon also found its way into the Northwestern Lutheran. Apparently Pastor Frey found the topic so important that he wanted as many

⁸⁰ Immanuel P. Frey, sermon on 1 Cor. 13, February 12th, 1956.

⁸¹ Immanuel P. Frey, sermon on 1 Cor. 13:1-13, February 15th, 1920.

⁸² Immanuel P. Frey, sermon on 1 Cor. 13, February 12th, 1956.

⁸³ Immanuel P. Frey, sermon on 1 Cor. 11:23-29, March 8th, 1942.

Christians as possible to read and hear the words that the apostle Paul had to say, because “When St. Paul spoke of the Lord’s Supper he claimed to speak with authority.”⁸⁴ This authority obviously came from Christ himself who appeared to him on the road to Damascus. That is what gave Paul the ability to explain the Lord’s Supper in “plain, unmistakable statements”⁸⁵ – a characteristic used by Immanuel’s contemporaries to describe his own writing style.⁸⁶

Knowing that he was a miserable sinner, Immanuel had learned to appreciate the forgiveness offered in the Lord’s Supper over the years and was dismayed to hear that people would stay away from it because of the fact that they didn’t feel “worthy” enough. In response to that harmful attitude he writes,

The Lord’s Supper was not intended for the holy angels but for sinful men, not for perfect saints (of which there are none on earth) but for those groaning under the burden of their sin. It was intended to demonstrate, as nothing else can, that though your sins be as scarlet they can be made white as snow.⁸⁷

It pained I.P. to see people scared away from the Lord’s Supper because of their sinfulness, because he considered the Lord’s Supper to be “one of the most gracious institutions which He has called into being for us... For it [the idea that the Lord’s Supper is only for the perfect] is altogether unfounded and robs Christians of perhaps the sweetest assurance that the Lord has for them.”⁸⁸

I.P. Frey’s love for the Lord’s Supper was founded in Christ’s forgiveness for the sinner, and his knowledge that Christ’s true body and blood are actually present in the

⁸⁴ Immanuel P. Frey, “The Lord’s Supper: One of the Burning Questions of the Reformation,” The Northwestern Lutheran, Vol. 29, 1942, p.343.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ One of the talents that I.P. was best remembered for was “his ability to state the doctrines of God’s Word with clear simplicity.” (Obituary of Immanuel P. Frey by Pastor Victor Bittorf, May 25th, 1964).

⁸⁷ Immanuel P. Frey, sermon on 1 Cor. 11:23-29, March 8th, 1942.

⁸⁸ Immanuel P. Frey, “The Lord’s Supper: One of the Burning Questions of the Reformation,” The Northwestern Lutheran, Vol. 29, 1942, p.344.

sacrament was founded purely on faith. “We can’t see them; we can’t taste them. The whole thing sounds unreasonable. We can’t explain it and we can’t understand it. But as Christians we believe it.”⁸⁹ One would be hard pressed to find a more succinct confession of faith in the Lord’s Supper – a blessing he clearly treasured and a promise for which he continually thanked God, as he may have done hundreds of times in this post-service prayer:

Lord God, heavenly Father, we thank thee for the gift of the Word and sacraments which thou hast given us for our salvation, and we pray thee to guard and preserve unto us this precious treasure against all enemies of thy saving truth so that we may not be led into false teachings but adhere to thy teachings unto our end. We confess that we have deserved by our indifference and ingratitude that the precious light of the word be taken from us, but be thou merciful and gracious unto us and do not punish us in thy wrath but preserve unto us thy word and sacraments that we may not be lost. O God, show mercy unto us and remove not thy Spirit from us but pour out the life-giving streams of thy mercy that all thirsting hearts may be filled with thy peace and joy and that we may all obtain eternal life through Jesus Christ thy Son, Our Lord, in whose name we offer these humble petitions.⁹⁰

- Christ –

As Immanuel P. Frey preached his final sermon to his sheep in Hoskins, Nebraska, he chose the text found at the beginning of 1 Corinthians – *Jesus Christ and him crucified* – because “That was the ever-recurring theme of Paul’s preaching and writing. It was the very heart and soul of his message. And that has also, year in and year out, been the all-overshadowing theme of this pulpit.”⁹¹ Indeed it was. Since Paul’s preaching “was always centered in Jesus as the God-appointed Savior who with his sacrificial death had atoned for the sins of men,”⁹² this is where Immanuel focused his

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ One of a collection of five typed prayers by I.P. Frey. [edited]

⁹¹ Immanuel P. Frey, sermon on 1 Cor. 2:1-5, April 30th, 1939.

⁹² Immanuel P. Frey, “The Example of the Bereans,” The Northwestern Lutheran, Vol. 31, 1944, p.10.

attention in any sermon or any article, whether he was technically given that text to work with or not. He may have loved these two beginning chapters of the first letter to Corinth so much because “There is nothing that can satisfy the sinner who is troubled about his sins but the message of Jesus and him crucified.”⁹³ And who can argue? It is a pleasure for any pastor to preach on these incredibly beautiful words concerning the cross of Christ.

Much can be said on this topic because much has been written. Not only are these words of Paul mentioned in numerous articles, but I.P. also preached on these sections over a dozen times and used the same chapters for quite a few special services too, such as the final sermon to Trinity in Hoskins mentioned above, his farewell sermon to the church in Phoenix, and the commencement address to the graduates at D.M.L.C. in 1946. It seemed that if Pastor I.P. Frey wanted to leave a group of hearers with just one thing – it would be the message spoken by Paul in the first part of Corinthians, because

Paul in his preaching kept the crucified Jesus in the foreground and himself in the background. He wanted them to forget the man who was preaching and to think only of the Savior who was being preached. When he got through preaching, he did not want the people to say: Isn't Paul an interesting and eloquent speaker? But rather: Isn't Jesus a wonderful Savior? He preached not himself but Christ Jesus the Lord, who alone could save sinners.⁹⁴

This servant-like attitude of the apostle Paul was the same attitude that Immanuel P. Frey exuded in all of his written works. And it was never more clearly demonstrated than in his final words to the members of Zion Lutheran Church in Phonenix:

The message which has been proclaimed was as much yours as mine. You have been my loyal and faithful co-workers, standing shoulder to shoulder in holding aloft the glorious banner of the cross, and I pray that you may

⁹³ Immanuel P. Frey, sermon on 1 Cor. 2:1-5, April 30th, 1939.

⁹⁴ Immanuel P. Frey, “We Preach Not Ourselves But Christ Jesus the Lord,” The Northwestern Lutheran, Vol. 29, 1942, p.55.

always make Jesus Christ and him crucified your chief interest and under the leadership of your new pastor gather in precious sheaves unto life eternal. Jesus Christ and him crucified, that is the legacy which I leave with you. May we always remain humble penitents at the foot of the cross and may we always be imbued with the fervent desire to share with other sinners this wonderful message of Jesus and him crucified.⁹⁵

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⁹⁵ Immanuel P. Frey, sermon on 1 Cor. 2:1-5, April 27th, 1924.

- CONCLUSION -



astor Immanuel P. Frey truly imitated the apostle Paul in his life and in his work. As an educated man, as a missionary, as a leader, and as a preacher of the Word of God, he emulated Paul as every Christian ought. But, as an imitator of Paul, I.P. Frey would be ashamed to have the focus stay on him. Accordingly, and rightly so, we focus on our Lord. He has blessed us with many great individuals who have come before us to uphold the Word of Truth and to defend the church from error. But he also urges us to “Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith” (Hebrews 13:7). This we hope to do. And in years to come, each time we review another Christian who was “a leading influence in the Wisconsin Synod toward the preservation of the precious heritage of conservative Lutheranism, the preaching, teaching, and practicing of God’s Word in its truth and purity,”⁹⁶ may we imitate his faith – who imitates Paul – who imitates Christ and him crucified.

⁹⁶ Obituary of Immanuel P. Frey by Pastor Victor Bittorf, May 25th, 1964.

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